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## The Crisis in American Education

Moderator, GEORGE V. DENNY, JR.

### Speakers

WILLARD E. GOSLIN

LEWIS H. HANEY



### THE LISTENER TALKS BACK

on

**"Are We Teaching People To Think?"**

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# Town Meeting

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## The Crisis in American Education

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### THE SPEAKERS' COLUMN

**DR. WILLARD E. GOSLIN**—Director of School Administration and Community Development, George Peabody College, Nashville, Tennessee, and former Superintendent of Pasadena Public Schools (1948-50). The son of a farmer, Dr. Goslin was born in Harrisburg, Missouri, in 1899. He attended the State Teachers' College, Kirksville, Missouri, where he received his B.A. degree in education. He received his M.A. from the University of Missouri in 1928, and did graduate work at Washington University, 1928-33. Dr. Goslin has served as Superintendent of Schools for several communities, including Slater, Missouri, 1923-28; Webster Groves, 1929-44; and Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1944-48. He has taught summer session at Northwestern University, University of Washington, Montana University and Stanford University. A past president of the American Association of School Administrators, he is currently a member of the Advisory Panel of the National Citizens Commission for the Public Schools.

**DR. LEWIS HANEY**—Professor of Economics at the Graduate School of Business Administration, New York University; columnist for Hearst Newspapers; author of *The History of Economic Thought*. Born in Eureka, Illinois, in 1882, Dr. Haney attended Dartmouth College, receiving his B.A. degree in 1903 and his M.A. in 1904. In 1906, he was awarded his Ph.D. by the University of Wisconsin. Dr. Haney taught at the University of Michigan as assistant professor of economics, 1908-10, and at the University of Texas as associate professor, 1910-12 and professor of economics, 1912-16. In 1916, Dr. Haney took charge of the Federal Trade Commission's gasoline investigation, and was made a member of the Economic Advisory Board of the F.T.C. He served as head of the Cost of Marketing Division of the Bureau of Business Research at New York University, 1920-32, and has been a professor of economics at New York University since 1920. Dr. Haney has served as a consultant to the National Association of Purchasing Agents, and as a Fellow of the American Statistical Association. He has had a syndicated daily financial column in the *New York Journal* since 1928.

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# The Crisis in American Education

## Moderator Denny:

Good evening, neighbors. If you don't think there is a crisis in American education today, it's very likely your opinion will be changed after you hear our distinguished speakers this evening. Both of them answer tonight's question in the affirmative, but for sharply different reasons.

Since this is the Town Meeting being held in the midst of American Education Week, we should be true to our American traditions and hear both sides and ask our speakers to answer questions from a representative American audience. Both Dr. Haney and Dr. Goslin are professional educators. Dr. Haney is Professor of Economics at the Graduate School of Business Administration at New York University, and Dr. Goslin is Director of School Administration and Community Development at George Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee. Dr. Haney is also a syndicated columnist, author of *The History of Economic Thought* and many other books on economic and financial subjects, including one on "How To Understand Money." We'll hear first from Dr. Lewis H. Haney.

## Dr. Haney:

I think Dr. Goslin and I can agree on three facts. First, nobody is attacking our public schools or seeking to destroy them. That is a red herring charge. Second, nobody wants the little red schoolhouse again, or teaching only the three R's. That is a straw man. Third, progressive education, while improving teaching methods, has gone to some extremes considered undesirable by many educators and parents.

Why do even the National Education Association leaders shift to the meaningless term "modern education?" The crisis in American education is exactly the same as in our athletics, tax collections, morals, politics and money. In all these we find the same lack of standards—standards of truth, honesty and stable values. We used to believe in the sanctity of marriage, in local self-government, and in pay according to product. Now there is a lack of such bases for general agreement so we call each other names.

I think we are like a boy brought up in a country home where he honored his folks and George Washington and had to go to school and church. He then goes to the big city and falls in with progressive youth who show him what they call the good society, advising him to do only what he wants to and to take things easy.

At bottom lies the attempt by some to shift the responsibility for our lives from us individuals to the nations. The American system is built on belief in the importance of the individual, on faith in free initiative and thought, and it is built on education that develops the individual child, equips him with knowledge, the means of exchanging ideas, and with faith in certain enduring values.

But along come those who see in the child only something to be socialized and adjusted to the government which is to care for him. Like all collectivists, they would subordinate the individual, you and me, to some group over and above the family, and would begin when we are very young, before we can develop independent thought. So the crisis centers in

the question, "What form of society is good?"

Two main practical fronts are: (1) Statism. Are we to go in for the welfare state socialists or fascists? (2) Progressive or modern pedagogy. Are our children to be socialized by conditioning them for what the organized educators call the good society? Are the teachers and their superintendents to replace the parents and to mold the whole child to their pattern of collectivist group behavior?

What to do about it? First, let us quit calling names and smearing and be reasonable. What does the United States stand for? Are the politicians to run the economy? Is the federal government more and more to supersede the state and local governments? Finally, is the nation to surrender its sovereignty to a world government?

What do our public schools stand for, Dr. Goslin? Are they to train our children to be citizens of the United States as we know it through history, dedicated to the greatest possible freedom of thought and choice? Or are the schools to take from the family and the church the responsibility for personal adjustments and to condition the whole child for the organized educators' notion of a good collectivist society?

Relatively few teachers and textbooks, I think, have been slanted towards communism, but many teachers and many texts are encouraging socialistic thinking that tends toward communism. Now many of us oppose this. Isn't it our duty to fight against it?

I am sure the NEA leaders are mistaken in charging that the hundreds of spontaneous outbursts of criticism of what goes on in the schools from Port Washington to Pasadena are a plot or

anything else than the honest indignation of local citizens. The organized educators have been active in attacking and smearing all persons who criticize the spreading of socialistic doctrines in our public schools. Do they then favor such doctrines?

I don't believe that the National Education Association under the leadership of such men as Benjamin, Givens and Skaife, or the schools of education that work with them are representative of the mass of patriotic American teachers and superintendents. They these latter should be reorganized and themselves be conditioned for the good society that is our true America.

#### **Moderator Denny:**

Thank you, Dr. Lewis Haney. Our next speaker, Dr. Willard E. Goslin, is a native of Missouri. A graduate of the University of Missouri who served as superintendent of schools in Missouri cities until 1944, he went to Minneapolis as superintendent of schools there, and in 1948 went to Pasadena, California. Dr. Goslin is a past president of the American Association of School Administrators and is currently a member of the Advisory Panel of the National Citizens Commission for the Public Schools. Dr. Willard E. Goslin, welcome to Town Meeting.

#### **Dr. Goslin:**

There is a crisis—a deep and alarming crisis—in American education, Dr. Haney, but I don't think it's the one you describe. It has been building up during twenty years of depression and war. The crisis is born mainly out of the distraction of the American people about the mounting complexities and tensions of our times. The American public school

system is staffed by a million loyal, hardworking citizens of this nation, doing a great job under terrific handicaps.

The handicaps fall into three groups. First, the public school system of America is being starved financially. The public schools are caught squarely between our tradition of local support and the brutal fact that we now collect most of our tax dollars at the federal level. We have fifty billion dollars a year and more for defense, nine billions a year for alcohol, but only a little more than five billion for our public education—not enough to build a classroom or hire a well-prepared teacher for tens and hundreds of thousands of American children.

I would like to ask Professor Haney as an economist for a positive suggestion about how to solve this part of the real crisis in American education.

We lost over four hundred thousand teachers for reasons other than death and retirement between 1940 and 1950. That proportion of loss would produce a crisis in any institution.

This is a nation of free enterprise, a country of free choice as to one's life work, a land where you have to pay the going price for services and commodities or do without them. I would like to keep it that way. However, the blunt truth is that we are not willing to pay the going price for school teachers, either in salary or working conditions, and as a consequence we are running out of school teachers.

A free people must dedicate enough of the best of its youth as teachers if it expects to maintain its freedom. We're not doing it. One of the greatest obstacles to good teaching and to an adequate program of education in this coun-

try lies in the number of children assigned to each teacher. No teacher can do a good job with forty or fifty children in her room.

We have fallen behind in supplying classrooms, adequate teaching materials, and teachers at the same time that our enrollments are increasing at the rate of about a million children a year. A million children require thirty thousand new classrooms, and they deserve thirty thousand bright-eyed, red blooded young Americans as teachers.

These deficiencies, Dr. Haney, are a part of the crisis in education.

My second concern has to do with how we decide educational matters. In some nations, programs and policies in education would be handed down by the church or passed along by the central government, but in America, as long as we are free people, program and policy in education must be hammered out by citizens working with their teachers in community after community across the land. It's in this area that most of the discussions and debates about education are centered.

No institution in the United States needs or deserves more of the benefits of our traditions of public analysis and evaluation through public discussion and criticism than the public school system. However, the American people and their school teachers have a right to expect that the criticism be analytical in nature and constructive in intent. They are frequently otherwise.

The crisis in American education, Dr. Haney, is further deepened by the fact that the public school system is caught in the cross-fire of nearly every top internal issue or struggle in the

United States. For example, the problem of the relationship of religion to the organized phases of American life is mounting in this country, and the discussions and struggles are centered almost exclusively on the public schools. In the interest of the religious and educational rights and privileges of every citizen of this nation, this question needs to be brought squarely into the open while all of us search for the right answer.

Another example. This nation is in the midst of a period of evolution and adjustment in many of the relationships between citizens of different racial backgrounds. Many areas of our society can dodge the problem. Churches with their present organization and stratification would rather face the question. The public utility is not interested in the color of its subscribers, but a public school system has to live with this issue and all of its manifestations.

Your presentation, Dr. Haney, shows clearly that the schools are caught squarely in the middle of our conflicts about economic and political policies. I think the shortage of teachers, buildings and equipment, the problems of reaching a decision on program, and the struggles over such issues as I have mentioned constitute the real crisis in American education.

I think we need to do four things about this crisis. One, work out an understanding of the area of responsibility of the schools. They are not everything to all men and never should try to be.

Second, find the largest areas of common agreement on which to stand while we debate our differences.

Third, keep the public channels of communication and discussion about education open to all the people.

Fourth, take every promising step to bring more and more of the American people into direct working contact with their school system. The broad base of the American people will retrieve their public schools from a crisis situation and defend them against all comers at the point at which they understand the problems and needs of their schools.

**Moderator Denny:**

Thank you, Dr. Goslin. Dr. Haney, you sat there quietly while Dr. Goslin presented his views and he threw a few challenges to you. Would you like to comment at this time?

**Dr. Haney:** Well, it seems, Dr. Goslin, that we are surrounded by crises on all sides—here a crisis, there a crisis.

First, I'll try to help you solve the one you like, then I'll ask you to come out and play with me and my crisis. You are worried about finances. Well, you can't avoid taxes by passing the buck to the federal government. The way to pay for our schools, I think, is to reduce our cost of federal government—say, foreign aid and farm subsidies, to start with—and then increase our local taxes for our local schools. And if you want to keep your teachers, it seems to me that you will have to let them teach our children and not baby-sit them. In teaching them respect for their American history and Constitution and government, and so forth, I think you will give them a basis for self-respect that will make them much happier. (Applause)

**Mr. Denny:** Thank you. Is that intended as a question, Dr. Haney, for Mr. Goslin, or do you want to ask him a question in addition to those comments?

**Dr. Haney:** I think that that

will give Dr. Goslin something to think about while I prepare another question.

**Dr. Goslin:** Well, I'd like to see Dr. Haney do a little more thinking, too. For instance, in the early part of your statement, Dr. Haney, you say that the crisis in American education is exactly the same as in our athletics, tax collections, morals, politics, and money and in these we find the same lack of standards, standards of truth, honesty, and stable value. Now I want to ask you this. Are you saying that the tens and hundreds of thousands of citizens in America who are members of boards of education, a million people who are teachers in the schools of this country, several million Americans who are working directly as lay citizens in connection with their school system—are you saying that they are lacking in standards of truth and honesty and value in relation to education or the American scene?

**Dr. Haney:** It is hardly necessary to reply to that question. Of course, no one does that. My question as to the crisis that I want Dr. Goslin to play with is put forth in the words of Carey McWilliams, a well-known communist-fronter, who states the problem to be this: "The opposition was commanded by Willard E. Goslin. The victory which the enemy has just won in Pasadena, therefore, demands careful study as a model in miniature of the big battle for control of public education which is now shaping up in the United States." It is that big battle in which this communist-fronter sides with you, Dr. Goslin, in the battle of Pasadena, that I want to play with tonight.

**Dr. Goslin:** Well, I wasn't aware that we were to refight the battle

of Pasadena. I thought we were here to discuss the crisis in American education, and that covers a lot of territory beyond Pasadena.

**Dr. Haney:** Well, let us take the question, then, of the smear article published in *McCall's Magazine* recently, which you recently favored in *Herald Tribune* talk, and which was later supported also in similar terms by the communist paper, the *Daily Worker*. What do you have to say to that, Dr. Goslin?

**Dr. Goslin:** I say that it is perfectly clear that Mr. Haney does not wish to deal with the crisis in American education. (*Applause*) Now if we wish to carry on this discussion without bringing any enlightenment to the American people, all we have to do is go back and forth between articles of this sort; and I would like to say I can name some, Mr. Haney. I've been reading your column rather consistently for some time now.

**Mr. Denny:** I want to take this occasion to say, Dr. Haney, that the views expressed by yourself and Dr. Goslin are solely your own and not necessarily the opinion of the American Broadcasting Company or the Town Hall. I say that advisedly, sir, because of the appellations you've attached to certain individuals. We believe in free and open discussion, but I just want to point out that these are entirely your observations and not ours.

**Dr. Haney:** Well, they are the observations made by the California Senate Committee, their quotations.

Now I want to state something I know about a crisis, which is not unrelated to the one that I have thus far emphasized, in my experience with students in my

classes—aside from bad writing and spelling, which of course we all suffer from or with. Too many of them don't know any history; too many of them don't expect to do any work; too many of them have poor command of the English language, no vocabulary; too many of them feel about things, they feel, feel, feel, and don't think or know anything; and they accept the idea that the government will provide. That is the fruit I think, of the kind of progressive education or modern education which perhaps you can better explain than I, Dr. Goslin.

**Dr. Goslin:** Professor Haney, you seem to have had a change of pace. Your number two sentence in your presentation was, "Nobody wants the little red school house or teaching only the three R's. That is a straw man." I'd just like to point out that teaching the R's is not a straw man to a million school teachers in this country. They think it's a tough rugged business trying to do a competent job in that field for thirty million American children where they are frequently overcrowded and working with the handicaps of insufficient materials along the line.

**Dr. Haney:** Well, Dr. Goslin, you say the main source of the school problem as you observe it consists or results from religious differences, racial issues, labor versus capital, party politics and so forth. Now I think that in that you are wrong, because in my town I find no religious issues, no labor capital issues, no racial issues, no party issues in the school question, or in the election of the school board. There is only one line of cleavage there, only one issue, and that is the issue of progressive education closely connected with the idea of a socialist slant.

**Dr. Goslin:** In the first place, I didn't say that the major issue had to do with these conflicts, but I did identify it as one of the areas contributing to the crisis in American education. But then when you raised the matter of socialism in relation to education, if that isn't saying that politics are impinging upon the schools, then I don't know how to say it.

**Mr. Denny:** All right, gentlemen, I think that seems to dispose of your major issues at this time. The aisles are full of people ready with questions.

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## QUESTIONS, PLEASE!

**Man:** Professor Haney, what do you mean by collectivism?

**Dr. Haney:** By collectivism I mean a system of thought and social organization in which the individual is subordinated to the state. It may be either socialism or communism.

**Man:** Mr. Goslin, "progressive education" is a much abused phrase. Will you please bring some light to a phrase now clouded by confusion?

**Dr. Goslin:** I'll be glad to try. In the first place, I'd like to point out that the phrase "progressive education" means whatever the individual wants it to mean who happens to be using it at the moment. It's a very much kicked-around phrase in this country at the present time. However, if by progressive education or progressive school you mean one where citizens and teachers and parents are sitting down to talk through

and think out the problems of their community and their children and then to try to set up a school system that will teach children in the light of those problems, I think that's in line with good education.

If you mean by progressive education one where teachers and parents are trying to come to an understanding as to how much each child can learn in relation to the important areas of subject-matter and skill that we have found in American life and help him to learn it in the light of the best knowledge that we have about child growth and development, if that's what you mean by a progressive school, then I'm for it, and I think that's the kind that the American people are for.

If you mean by progressive education a school that recognizes that when a child comes, that what happens to him in school is going to have something to do with his physical stamina and his emotional stability and so forth, and that you are going to try to plan and develop the school so that it contributes to this child's total citizenship development, if that's what you mean by progressive education, I'm for it and I believe the American people are for it when they understand it.

(Applause)

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you. Since both of our speakers used this phrase, I think Dr. Haney ought to have a right to give his definition of progressive education.

*Dr. Haney:* Well, I don't know what the people of Pasadena think about this progressive education, but I do know that there is connected with it the idea of a collectivist philosophy essentially and necessarily connected with the education that comes down

through Karl Marx, to John Dewey, Kilpatrick and the others, which is essentially the idea of taking the whole child out of the influence of the family and the church and subjecting him to a conditioning process, subordinating him to the group. And in the so-called common learning scheme which Dr. Goslin left at Minneapolis, I have seen that program and it calls for subjecting the child first to learn what he can do for his school; second, to learn what he can do for his community, and third, finally, to find out what he has to do to adjust to his family. I think that is typical of the bad side of this progressive education.

*Dr. Goslin:* I know, after working in the schools of this country for a long time and being pretty well a part of this controversy for the last few years in American education, that what Dr. Haney has said is exactly what he and some others are trying to attach to good development in education in this country in order to stampede the American people and their teachers back to some kind of a skeleton of education that will set this country up for the kind of controls that it seems some folks would like to exercise in America. (Applause)

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you, Dr. Goslin and Dr. Haney. Next question from the gentleman over on the left.

*Man:* Dr. Haney, you spoke copiously against smearing those you disagree with in educational politics. What, in this welfare state, that in your own words tends to communism would you want social studies teachers or history teachers to denounce—public housing, social security, or a free public school system?

*Dr. Haney:* I wouldn't ask the teachers to denounce anything. I would ask them merely to tell the truth about things without slanting or bias. (*Applause*)

*Man:* Well, let's not smear and let's not say the New Deal, the Fair Deal, or the Welfare State or the Republican Party tends towards communism. What in the welfare state that you denounce would you want us to denounce?

*Dr. Haney:* I'm not talking about the political parties and I refuse to consider this a political issue. It's an ideological issue. It's the two sides of the curtain. It's the fundamental difference between the individual and his rights and the subordinating of him to the group, the state, and so forth, welfare or not.

*Mr. Denny:* Let's not ask Mr. Haney to repeat his initial speech. I think the things he wants to denounce are implicit in the statements that he made at the opening of the program. The lady over here.

*Lady:* Dr. Goslin, I'm a parent and I'd like to do something about this. How important is a selection or the election of a school board who will insure sound democratic methods in curriculum in our public schools?

*Dr. Goslin:* I consider that the United States has had its best experience with representative government in terms of lay membership on boards of education in this country, and therefore I consider that it is the foundation of the welfare of a school system for a community to select an adequate cross-section of its people for membership on its board of education.

*Man:* Dr. Haney, is there justification for a demand for a uni-

form national set of requirements for high school teachers? If not, why not?

*Dr. Haney:* Well, I think that depends upon how intensive the demands are. If you demand that the high school teacher be honest and intelligent and clean and a good American citizen, I think you have the rudiments for getting a good teacher to start with.

*Man:* That's rather evident. I'm speaking of courses that the teachers are required to have on their transcripts.

*Dr. Haney:* Well, I think it would be very unfortunate to encourage, as I am afraid there is a tendency now, a sort of monopoly on the part of certain schools of education for advancement to the higher positions, at least. As I understand it, you have to take certain courses which are given by people who are pretty heavily weighted in these directions that I refer to as collectivism.

*Mr. Denny:* All right, thank you. The lady over on the right.

*Lady:* Dr. Goslin, what methods would you suggest might be used to work towards solving this question of religion in the public schools?

*Dr. Goslin:* I think that the matter of public discussion and the complete ventilation of this issue, both as it relates to education and as it relates to every other phase of American life, is fundamental to our health and happiness as a nation in this country.

*Man:* Dr. Haney, can we continue as a republic with democratic ideals and at the same time deny students a look at competitors?

*Dr. Haney:* I think I know what you're driving at, although it's pretty hard to get it from your words. I think that certainly edu-

cation requires looking at and understanding the nature of all the pertinent facts of life. All I object to as an educator is attempting to teach people things which they can't understand and which constitute a process of molding or conditioning.

*Man:* Dr. Goslin, since all schools are not perfect, how specifically would you have parents work toward better schools and text-books?

*Dr. Goslin:* I would have teachers and parents and other citizens work together in terms of developing policies, in hammering out programs and making the important decisions about education that have to do with the public welfare of this country, as well as the educational welfare of this country. I would have them on committees that have to do with curriculum. I would have them on committees that have to do with determining financial policy and all of the basic items that relate to the welfare of the educational program in a community.

*Lady:* Dr. Haney, what, if any, would you say is the salient difference between progressive education of the past ten years and that of, say, 25 years ago?

*Dr. Haney:* The progressive education of the earlier decades to which you refer was largely focused on the problem of the child and his development—the discovery of the best periods at which to introduce various subjects—and matters of that sort, the appeal to interest, the technique of pedagogy. As time has gone by, as I observe the thing, those educators who are centered more on the social problem and the collectivization of the child have gone on. John Dewey has changed somewhat, modified his ideas from '30

on. I rely partly on the judgment of Professor Ulich, of Harvard for that.

Now, then, we come to this more difficult problem of the tendency not only to take the child, but to take him for the purpose of molding for what they think is the good society.

*Dr. Goslin:* I want to say a word about that. I think I know about as many of the practicing school teachers in this country as anyone around this nation, and if there's a group in America who is trying to develop the individual capacities and the strength of each individual child so that he can go out and stand on his own feet in American life and face the tough problems that are before us, it's the school teachers of this country.

*Dr. Haney:* I want to say "Amen" to that, and it is the millions of school teachers who belong only nominally to this National Education Association bunch with their monopoly or trust of education to which I am appealing. It is these leaders who are seeking to lobby. They even have their goon squads out in different towns. If anybody ventures to make any criticism of the teaching in the schools it wants, Brother Skaife is on the job publishing material in the papers, and so forth, and it's taken up by their amplifiers, and you have a regular pressure group brought to bear on it. I know. (*Applause*)

*Dr. Goslin:* Dr. Haney, who has just spoken, is the same gentleman who read his initial statement in which he said we ought to stop calling names. (*Applause*)

*Mr. Denny:* All right. Next question.

*Lady:* Dr. Haney, is part of the crisis in education due to the fact

that parents are expecting schools to teach what they themselves neglect to do?

*Dr. Haney:* I'm afraid that that is true. I'm afraid that is true.

*Man:* Dr. Goslin, do teachers and superintendents of schools welcome or resent criticisms of the schools?

*Dr. Goslin:* I believe we are moving into a period now where criticism is more completely invited—criticism and discussion and debate—on the part of teachers and leaders in American education than at any time in the whole history of this country. I tried to say in my statement that there is no institution in American life more in need of the benefits of public discussion and debate about its policies and objectives and responsibilities than the American school system, and I find that that point of view is supported on the part of school people all over this country.

*Mr. Denny:* Well, we ought to have some Town Meetings in schools, Dr. Goslin. Next question.

*Man:* Dr. Haney, if you believe textbooks are slanted, what method of censorship do you propose?

*Dr. Haney:* I don't propose any method of censorship. Censorship is a bad thing, and I have nothing to say in favor of it. Why should you put the question in that way?

*Man:* Well, Dr. Haney, what method of judgment do you bring to bear as to what textbooks are used?

*Dr. Haney:* Why, by the fair and full discussion of them, which is so resented, so bitterly resented, by all the people whom I come in contact with in the schools in my town.

*Man:* Dr. Goslin, to what extent can child delinquency be caused by such progressive education which does not recognize moral values?

*Dr. Goslin:* Well, I don't know any education, progressive or otherwise, that doesn't recognize moral values. And I do not know any education, excepting places where education is so weak by neglect and lack of support, that can possibly be said to be contributing to delinquency in this country.

*Lady:* This probably bears on the same question. Dr. Goslin, do you think religious education on release time should be encouraged in order to rebuild higher standards of public morals?

*Dr. Goslin:* I don't think I know. But I do think that the American people, and I'm repeating now, of all shades of religious points of view and of all interests in education need to get this whole problem of the relationship of religion to education and the other phases of organized American life out into the open, talk it back and forth, and try to find the largest area of common agreement on which we can all stand in America to keep us from going along and threatening our very unity by division over this particular subject in American life.

*Dr. Haney:* I just want to say "Amen" to what Dr. Goslin has just said.

*Mr. Denny:* All right, Dr. Haney, thank you very much. We find agreement at the end. I want to thank you both for a very lively contribution to a very important subject. So plan to be with us next week and every week at the sound of the Crier's Bell.

# THE LISTENER TALKS BACK

"ARE WE TEACHING PEOPLE TO THINK?"

Program of November 6, 1951

## Speakers

Theodore Greene

Norman Cousins

Crane Brinton

Leslie Groves



Each week we print as many significant comments on the preceding Tuesday's broadcast as space allows. You are invited to send in your opinions, pro and con. The letters should be mailed to Department A, Town Hall, New York 18, N.Y., not later than Thursday following the program. It is understood that we may publish any letters or comments received.



## KNOWING VS. THINKING

What is it to be able to think in a mature manner? For one thing, it is an ability to make the jump from particulars to generalities. It is the ability to weigh and sift evidence before reaching conclusions. It involves an effort to curb the self-ness in us in making decisions (the person who is totally controlled by emotion or instinct is totally incapable of thinking); it thus involves an effort of the will. . . . The man who has learned to think is not worried about how much he knows, because he has mastered a technique of approaching any set of circumstances. The most outstanding characteristics of such a man is that he is adaptable. . . .

From my own experience as a student and teacher I would say that [college students] are *not* being taught the kind of thinking . . . in as large a dose as they should be. I say "as they should be" because if college's function is to impart information rather than to teach students to think, let's disband them and set up more efficient information centers which can cram knowledge down the students' throats, after the

manner of the sleep-teaching techniques which psychologists are eagerly working on and the effectiveness of which advertisers have long since recognized.

Let me list some of the reasons why students are not being effectively taught to think.

1. The trend toward the ever-larger size of colleges, universities, and thus classes. It is the very rare professor who can stimulate a class of three hundred or even fifty to think for themselves; actually, it is all but a physical impossibility.

2. The vast amount of information on any subject which each department feels bound to impart to the students. For this we have the modern worship of science largely to thank; it is assumed that one cannot as much as have a thought until one has rooted around endlessly in a huge field of information.

3. The system of recruiting college teachers. The man who *knows* the most is the one who gets the job, which, more specifically, means the man with the Ph.D. . . . Naturally these men would rather deliver lectures crammed with information than worry about

whether the student is thinking. The most dismal practice in American higher education is that of students automatically scribbling notes down day after day. Universities have as yet not faced up to the conflict between research and teaching. . . .

4. American college life in general does not lend itself easily to the strengthening of thinking habits. It is difficult merely to be alone with a book (or with a thinking teacher) for more than an hour a day at best, because there are so many pleasant temptations around the student: athletics, fraternity doings, dates, roommates, radios, movies, et al. . . . [But] because teaching techniques in colleges put a premium on memory work, most students manage to muddle through, none the less.—DAVID GOLDWIN, Troy, New York.

#### INTELLIGENCE VS. EDUCATION

There is a difference between an intelligent and an educated person. There are many intelligent students; unfortunately, many learn in the early grades and continue through the university that it is wise to write on one's exams ideas that will appeal to the teacher, rather than dare to deviate into an expression of independent thinking. . . .

I believe many teachers . . . expect memorization of certain facts or information as their requirement for a good student. Many teachers fail completely to teach students 1) how to study, 2) how to think independently, and 3) how to express themselves concisely and clearly. . . . Mere knowledge of facts is not sufficient for leadership; independent thinking is essential for the understanding and evaluation and decisions that

confront this present generation. Merely reading history is not sufficient; it requires careful interpretation and analysis. For instance, military and political facts of the Civil War today are less important than studying the causes and the results. It is in the careful analysis of the past that we may understand and evaluate the present and then make wise plans for the future. — KATHRYN D. SCHAKEL, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

#### A PREPARED PATTERN

I believe education has combined with commercialism so much that from the time man rolls out of his cradle everything is such a prepared pattern for him to follow that he does not have to think, nor does he have time for it anyway. His feeding, play time, sleep time, etc. as a baby is a "bottled" scheduled affair that doesn't dare to be broken. His toys are made in such a way that he doesn't have to figure out a thing; it's all done in the machine shop. His play pen keeps him from getting into trouble but does not teach him how to think or sense when danger is near him. His parents leave him with baby sitters to either read comics with him, look at television, or read some trivial piggy piggy book that he's heard over and over again. At school his education has become so visualized that he doesn't have to think or use his imagination, for when a new word is given to him a picture is flashed on quickly so that it's all done for him. . . . I believe because of the increase in students and decrease in teachers the whole educational system has taken the easy way out so that there is no individualism, no desire for competition, and class education has become ritualized cut and dried patterns that every

teacher carries out in her programs daily.

This has not just been the case in grade schools; it has been carried out in high schools, colleges, churches, homes, business, everywhere. It's a characteristic of the whole world. Everything is ritualized, militarized, mechanized, and we who protest against this system cannot get away from it no matter how hard we try.—MRS. RICHARD L. CLAUSER, Springfield, Ohio.

#### LEARNING TO THINK

One learns to think by "required concentration" on the part of students, by being required to deduce from a written passage or article what the writer meant to convey, and by a critical appraisal of same. This method may sound

old-fashioned, but it is training the mind to be logical, to follow through, so that in all problems in later life one will as a consequence be clear-headed and a straight thinker, whether the issue be politics, religion, or what-have-you.—ALYCE VERHULST, Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

Tonight's discussion was tops—one of the finest we have listened to over the years. All four participants were fine, and the two college professors were brilliant. . . . How is the best way to make people think? I know of none better than to listen to a discussion like that tonight. I hope we will have many more on this same high plane. — JOHN F. HOUSE, Nashville, Tennessee.

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#### EDITOR'S NOTE

(The following is a statement by Mr. Carey McWilliams in reference to Dr. Haney's remark which appears on page 7):

"Having enjoyed the free speech permitted on America's Town Meeting of the Air many times, I am glad that Dr. Lewis Haney was permitted to say what he had to say on this program, including his reference to me as 'a well known communist front,' but I am grateful to Town Meeting and George V. Denny, Jr. for this chance to state that the reference to me was not only a feeble substitute for an argument but a smear and a wholly inaccurate statement. Speech only remains free where an opportunity is given those maligned a chance to refute their maligners. I look forward to appearing on the same platform with Dr. Haney one of these days."



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